

Healthy Yards and Healthy Waterways

Rainwater that does not soak into the ground washes across our lawns and gardens, picking up chemicals and debris along the way until it reaches a storm drain. These storm drains empty untreated water into local creeks, rivers and lakes. Applying more chemicals to our yards than is absolutely necessary, such as fertilizers and pesticides, can be harmful to the plants and animals that depend on these water resources. This can affect us by increasing the cost of cleaning the water for drinking and recreational use, and by reducing the use of these water resources for fishing, swimming and other activities.

Follow these easy tips to create a healthy yard AND protect our waterways:

- **Plant native plants!** Native plants have adapted to the conditions of the area and require fewer chemicals for growth and pest management.
- **Compost!** Help reduce debris that enters and decays in our waterways. As large amounts of organic matter (such as leaf litter) decays, it uses up much of the life-sustaining oxygen in the water, which can lead to poor water quality.
- **Harvest rainwater!** Rain barrels can be used to capture some of the water that falls on your rooftop – diverting it away from the storm sewer system and allowing it to be reused as water for your plants.
- **Use lawn and garden chemicals correctly or switch to alternatives!** Be smart with your use of fertilizers and pesticides. Follow instructions on the packaging closely and avoid using chemicals when wet weather is in the forecast. Switching to organic lawn care methods not only creates a better environment for your family but will help you protect your watershed!
- **Don't mow too short!** Keep your grass at 3 ½ inches or higher. This helps to shade out weeds, thereby reducing the need for herbicides, and it increases the depth of grass roots, which will help water soak into your lawn better.

For more information please visit: www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org

